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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Letter dated 11 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

It is with great concern that I am writing to draw your attention to the fact that on 1 September 2015, the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, from their positions in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, opened fire purposefully targeting a wedding ceremony in Gapanly village of the Terter district. Three civilians, including one child, were wounded.

Direct, deliberate targeting of civilians is a blatant case of violation of international humanitarian law by Armenia and constitutes a war crime under international criminal law.

Unfortunately, it is not a new phenomenon. During the ongoing aggression against the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia has committed numerous crimes against civilians: indiscriminate attacks against and killing of civilians, hostage-taking and detention, inhuman treatment and execution of war prisoners and hostages and ethnic cleansing of the occupied territories. The most heinous of them is the massacre of the civilian population of the town of Khojaly, which resulted in the death of hundreds, including children, women and the elderly.

These crimes were not an isolated or sporadic act, but were part of Armenia's deliberate, widespread and systematic policy and practice of atrocities, at the core of which are odious ideas of racial superiority, ethnic differentiation, hatred and territorial expansionism.

The documents adopted by international organizations explicitly refer to the crimes committed by Armenia as a blatant breach of international humanitarian law. Yet, in 1993, in its resolution 853 (1993), the Security Council particularly condemned attacks on civilians and bombardments of inhabited areas and expressed

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its grave concern at the displacement of large numbers of civilians in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The permanent violation of the ceasefire regime and subjection of the civilian population to armed attacks clearly prove that Armenia is not interested in a peaceful settlement of the conflict and that its true intention is to continue the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and to maintain the current status quo by all means.

While the protection of civilians is high on the agenda of the Security Council and the international community strives to enhance protection and minimize casualties, Armenia, in full breach of its international legal obligations, carries on with its policy of targeted killing and maiming of the civilian population. It must be stopped.

The Security Council should take decisive actions to put an end to Armenia's continued aggression against the Republic of Azerbaijan and the impunity that it has enjoyed for decades.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33 and 38, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative